

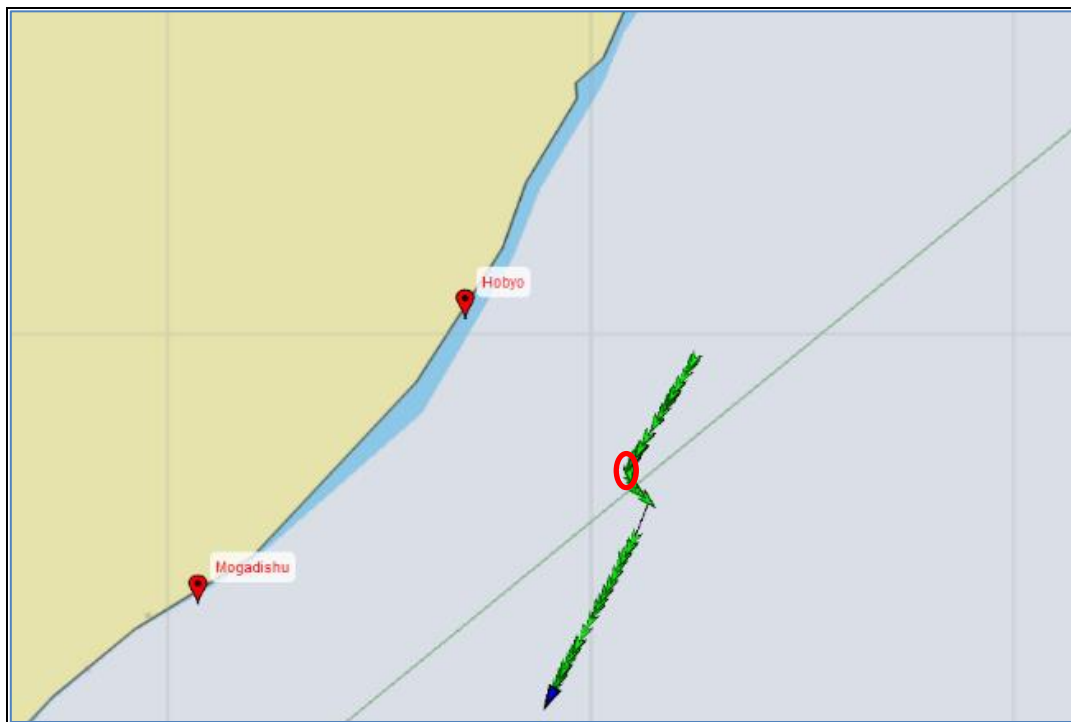


## Industry Releasable Threat Bulletin (IRTB) 004

Issued: 28 Feb 18

**For official use only.** This Threat Bulletin has been released to the Shipping Industry in confidence. It should not be disseminated further without permission.

1. **Foreword.** This IRTB has been written by EU NAVFOR and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). It is intended to inform risk management decision making for shipping operators responsible for merchant vessels that are transiting through the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden (GoA), Gulf of Oman (GoO) and the Western Indian Ocean.
2. The purpose of an **Industry Releasable Threat Bulletin (IRTB)** is to provide a specific update to industry on events that may require military advice above and beyond the overarching Industry Releasable Threat Assessment. The information contained in the IRTBs will be incorporated into the IRTA at the next opportunity.
3. **Incident/identifier.** 22 Feb 18 MT LEOPARD SUN.
4. **Date/time.** 222102Z Feb 18.
5. **Location.** 157nm off the coast of Somalia (East of Hobyo). The attack on MT LEOPARD SUN took place in position 03 26N, 050 27E.

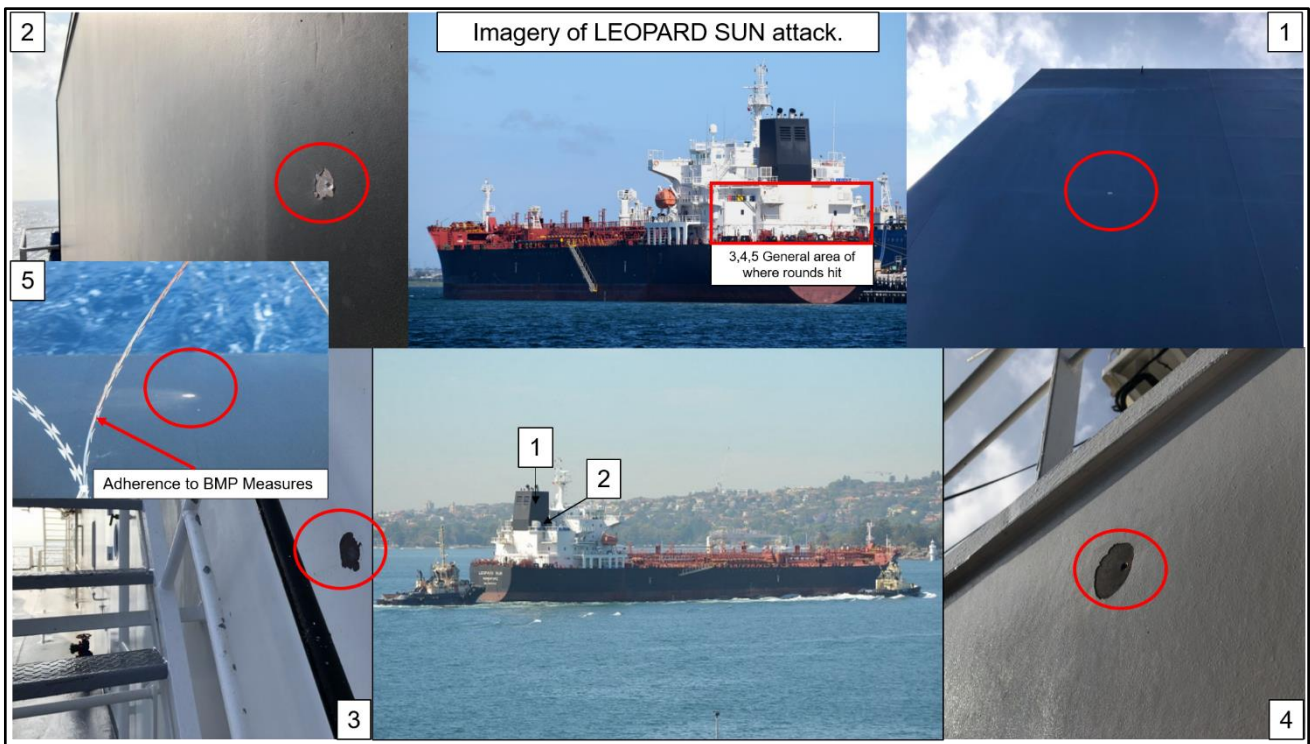


6. **Vessel Description.**

**MT LEOPARD SUN;** Singapore flagged oil/chemical tanker. LOA 183m x Breadth 32.2m, 49,999 GRT. Freeboard 7.9m.



7. **Event Description.** On 22 February, at 2102Z (0002L 23 FEB), *MT LEOPARD SUN*, came under attack from 2 skiffs in position 03 26N – 050 27E, approximately 157nm East of Somalia. The skiffs approached the vessel from the stern, firing multiple rounds, some of which struck the superstructure of the vessel. The embarked Private Armed Security Team (PAST) returned fire with one of the skiffs as it closed to within 100m of the MT. During this phase the other skiff was reported to be at a distance of 250m from the vessel. The attack lasted for approximately 27 minutes and upon the initial engagement the MT sounded its alarm and mustered the crew in the citadel in line with BMP security practices. The incident was reported as closed by UKMTO (via Mercury) at 2236Z (0136L).



8. **Outcome.** The incident was ultimately unsuccessful and both the vessel and her crew were left unharmed.

9. **Follow up.** Since the attack on the *MT LEOPARD SUN* we have seen no further incidents or tripwires that would indicate that there is an active Pirate Action Group (PAG) in the area. Based on

an assessment of the realistic period that the skiffs would have been able to self-sustain at sea, we assess the group has LIKELY returned to Somalia.

10. **Comment.**

a. This incident serves as a timely reminder that through the effective implementation of BMP measures and procedures, combined with a continued presence of international naval forces, **piracy has been suppressed - not eradicated**. It is LIKELY that criminal pirate networks will continue to seek opportunistic targets when weather conditions are favorable and as such continued vigilance and adherence to BMP measures is vital.

b. The incident highlights that the BMP measures put in place by industry **remain fit for purpose**; the high standard of implementation by *MT LEOPARD SUN* is to be commended. In this instance the vigilance of the crew, the presence of a PAST and the implementation of BMP measures denied the potential pirates the opportunity to attempt a boarding.

c. This incident also highlights **the importance of reporting all suspicious incidents to UKMTO at the time they are observed**.

d. This incident has common attributes with the incidents involving the *MV EVER DYNAMIC* and the *FV GALERNA III* in November 2017<sup>1</sup> and serves as a reminder that the potential threat from piracy is not solely limited to the coastal areas of Somali and the Gulf of Aden. This event took place some distance from the Somali coast (157nm) and demonstrates the capability of PAGs to operate well into the Indian Ocean.

11. **Assessment.** This information is assessed as HIGHLY LIKELY to be an attempted pirate attack. Whilst it cannot be completely discounted that the incident may have been related to local fishing activity we assess this to be HIGHLY UNLIKELY.

12. Due to the difficulty and risk associated with targeting a vessel in the hours of darkness we assess that this was most likely an opportunistic attack, rather than a deliberate attempt to conduct an attack under the cover of darkness, and as such is UNLIKELY to mark a deliberate evolution of tactics. This possibility of a tactical evolution cannot however be completely dismissed; further trend analysis will be necessary to understand the significance of this attack.

13. **Publication and feedback.**

a. Prepared by CMF and EU NAVFOR.

b. Distributed by the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSC HoA).

c. All enquiries - in the first instance – should be referred to MSCHOA using:

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(2) **Fax:** +44 (0) 1923 958520

(3) **Website:** [www.mschoa.org](http://www.mschoa.org)

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<sup>1</sup> IRTB 002 issued 15 Dec 17.